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ZNR UUUUU ZZH ZUI RUEWCSE3894 2300500
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FM AMCONSUL GUANGZHOU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHINGTON DC

UNCLAS GUANGZHOU 028035

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STATE FOR OES
JUSTICE FOR ENRD/BOB ANDERSON
USDOC FOR ITA/MAC - DAS LEVINE, MCQUEEN
USDA FOR FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: SENV ECON PGOV CH

SUBJECT: A/S MCMURRAY DISCUSSES WILDLIFE PROTECTION EFFORTS
WITH GUANGDONG OFFICIALS

REF: A) HONG KONG 3252 (NOTALL)

B) SHANGHAI 5261 (NOTALL)

(U) THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED. PLEASE
PROTECT ACCORDINGLY. NOT FOR RELEASE OUTSIDE U.S.
GOVERNMENT CHANNELS. NOT FOR INTERNET PUBLICATION.

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY. THE A/S MCMURRAY DELEGATION MET WITH
REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GUANGDONG WILDLIFE PROTECTION
ADMINISTRATION (WPA) ON AUGUST 4 TO DISCUSS PROVINCIAL-LEVEL
EFFORTS AND CHALLENGES. THE WPA OFFICIALS ASSURED A/S
MCMURRAY THAT THEY WERE SERIOUS ABOUT WILDLIFE PROTECTION,
BUT RECOGNIZED THAT PROBLEMS STILL EXIST. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) DURING A LENGTHY PRESENTATION, WPA OFFICIALS OUTLINED
THE ADMINISTRATION'S ORGANIZATION AND THE RELEVANT LAWS AND
REGULATIONS GOVERNING THEIR ACTIVITIES. THE WPA OFFICIALS
ASSURED A/S MCMURRAY THAT THEY WERE SERIOUS ABOUT WILDLIFE
PROTECTION, BUT RECOGNIZED THAT PROBLEMS STILL EXIST. WPA
HAS CONDUCTED PUBLICITY CAMPAIGNS PARTICULARLY TARGETING THE
YOUNGER GENERATION IN ORDER TO CHANGE ENTRENCHED HABITS AND
WILDLIFE PRODUCT CONSUMPTION PATTERNS. THE OFFICIALS
CLAIMED THAT WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTERS IN GUANGDONG HELP AN
AVERAGE OF 200,000 ANIMALS EACH YEAR. WPA OFFICIALS STATED
THAT THEIR MAIN SUCCESSES HAVE BEEN IN RAIDS AGAINST
WILDLIFE PRODUCT MARKETS, RESTAURANTS, PROCESSING PLANTS,
AND IN BORDER AREAS WHERE WILDLIFE PRODUCTS TRANSIT. WHILE
THE WILDLIFE MARKETS HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO SHUT DOWN, WPA
OFFICIALS ADMITTED THAT SOME MARKETS STILL OPERATE, BUT IN A
MORE CLANDESTINE WAY. WPA OFFICIALS EXPRESSED SATISFACTION
AT THE LEVEL OF COOPERATION BETWEEN WPA, THE GUANGDONG FOOD
AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND THE PROCURATORATE IN
PROSECUTING WILDLIFE CRIMES.

¶3. (U) A/S MCMURRAY STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION IN COMBATING WILDLIFE PROTECTION PROBLEMS,
EXPRESSING THE DESIRE FOR CHINA TO JOIN THE COALITION
AGAINST WILDLIFE TRAFFICKING, A PARTNERSHIP WITH THE UNITED
STATES, THE U.K., INDIA, AND 14 NGOS THAT GOES BEYOND CITES
IN INCREASING PUBLIC AWARENESS AND HELPING COUNTRIES ENFORCE
THEIR WILDLIFE PROTECTION LAWS. OFFICIALS NOTED THEY HAD
BEEN APPROACHED BY A EUROPEAN COALITION ON WILDLIFE
CONSERVATION WITH THE ACRONYM "CIC" ALSO WANTING THEM TO
BECOME A MEMBER.

¶4. (U) THE DELEGATION MEMBERS ALSO QUESTIONED WPA OFFICIALS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL CHINESE MEDICINE AND WILDLIFE PRODUCTS (I.E. RHINOCEROS HORN AND TIGER BONE), SOME OF THE MOST COMMON WILDLIFE ENFORCEMENT PROBLEMS THEY HAVE ENCOUNTERED, THE MOST COMMON ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCTS IN THE PROVINCE, AND JUDICIAL SENTENCING LIMITATIONS.

¶5. (SBU) CHEN WEIKUN, DIRECTOR OF THE GUANGDONG FORESTRY POLICE BUREAU, NOTED THAT THEIR BIGGEST CHALLENGE IS IN COMBATING AN INCREASINGLY DECENTRALIZED, WELL-HIDDEN, AND EXTREMELY PROFITABLE NETWORK OF WILDLIFE TRAFFICKERS. LEGAL TRADE WITH HONG KONG AND MACAU IS HIGH, CHEN SAID, AND SURMISED THAT THE ILLEGAL TRADE WAS AS WELL. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE MOST COMMONLY TRADED ILLEGAL WILDLIFE PRODUCT, CHEN WAS VERY HESITANT IN REPLYING, FINALLY ADMITTING THAT IVORY WAS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM. TRADE IN IVORY FROM AFRICA AND SMUGGLED INTO CHINA IS VERY PROFITABLE, HE SAID. ON SENTENCING LIMITATIONS, CHEN CLARIFIED THAT JUDICIAL PUNISHMENTS ARE DETERMINED BASED ON THE VOLUME OF SMUGGLING, BUT THAT THESE CONSISTED MAINLY OF FINES. AFTER PAYING THE FINES, VENDORS ARE OFTEN RELEASED AND CONTINUE THEIR ILLEGAL TRADE. CHEN DID NOTE THAT UNDER CHINESE LAW SMUGGLERS CAN FACE UP TO THE DEATH PENALTY, WHILE POACHERS CAN EARN 10 YEARS IMPRISONMENT. MONETARY FINES HAVE BEEN RECENTLY INCREASED TO A MAXIMUM OF RMB 10,000 (USD 1,250) FOR OFFERING WILDLIFE IN MARKETS (AN ATTEMPT TO REDUCE TRANSMITTING ZOONOTIC DISEASES), AND A RECENT CASE OF A MAJOR DEALER WAS RECENTLY SUCCESSFULLY PROSECUTED, RESULTING IN A LARGE FINE AND IMPRISONMENT. FOR WORLD WILDLIFE DAY (FEBRUARY 2), GUANGDONG AUTHORITIES CIRCULATED A PETITION ASKING PEOPLE NOT TO EAT WILD ANIMALS. GUANGDONG ALSO CELEBRATES A WILD BIRD DAY IN MARCH AND A WILD ANIMAL PROTECTION DAY IN NOVEMBER TO RAISE AWARENESS. WHEN PRESSED, CHEN ADMITTED THAT IN ADDITION TO BREEDING FARMS FOR MACAQUES AND DEER, THERE IS ONE BEAR FARM (FOR THE EXTRACTION OF BILE) IN GUANGDONG.

¶6. (SBU) WPA REPRESENTATIONS THAT GUANGDONG AUTHORITIES HAVE GONE FAR TO REDUCE THE OPEN TRADE IN WILDLIFE WOULD APPEAR TO BE BORNE OUT BY FACT. FOLLOWING OFFICIAL MEETINGS, THE DELEGATION MADE AN UNSCHEDULED VISIT TO THE GUANGZHOU WILDLIFE MARKET WHERE THE SOURCE OF THE 2003 SARS OUTBREAK WAS FIRST IDENTIFIED. THE ROWS OF CEMENT BLOCK STALLS WITH STEEL ROLL-DOWN OPENINGS WERE DEVOID OF ACTIVITY, EVEN THOUGH IT WAS STILL RELATIVELY EARLY IN THE MORNING. A FEW TURTLES (POSSIBLE CITES APPENDIX II-LISTED), FROGS AND SNAKES WERE THE ONLY ANIMALS ON DISPLAY, AND THE ENTIRE AREA HAD RECENTLY BEEN HOSED DOWN AND SWEPT. VENDORS WERE WARY AND UNWILLING TO ENGAGE IN CONVERSATION, ALTHOUGH NOT HOSTILE. THE WATCHFUL PRESENCE OF HEALTH AND MARKET ADMINISTRATORS AND THE LACK OF ACTIVITY TOGETHER SEEMED TO INDICATE THE VISIT HAD BEEN ANTICIPATED WELL IN ADVANCE. A SUBSEQUENT STOP AT ANOTHER MARKET AREA, WHICH 20 YEARS AGO OPENLY STOCKED A WIDE ARRAY OF ENDANGERED ANIMALS AND ANIMAL PARTS, REVEALED ONLY SEVERAL SMALL STANDS WITH DUCKS AND CHICKENS IN CLOSE CONFINEMENT TO EACH OTHER (IN CONTRAVIENION TO RIGOROUS MEASURES EMPLOYED BY HONG KONG HEALTH AUTHORITIES TO COMBAT AVIAN INFLUENZA), CATS AND DOGS (FOR CONSUMPTION), AS WELL AS SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITIES OF DRIED SEAHORSES AND STARFISH, WHICH ARE FACING SERIOUS DECLINES IN MOST PARTS OF THE WORLD, BUT NO ENDANGERED LIVE MAMMALS.

¶7. (SBU) COMMENT. IT WAS APPARENT THAT THE ILLEGAL WILDLIFE TRADE IN GUANGDONG IS A SOURCE OF SOME EMBARRASSMENT FOR GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS. THE WPA OFFICIALS WORKED HARD TO CAST THEIR EFFORTS IN A GOOD LIGHT FOR THE DELEGATION AND WERE RELUCTANT TO TALK IN DETAIL ABOUT CHALLENGES IN THEIR WORK. THEIR INABILITY TO FULLY ENFORCE WILDLIFE LAWS AND REGULATIONS WOULD BE SEEN AS A LOSS OF FACE. POST ALSO NOTES THAT THE POTENTIAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CRIMINAL GANGS ("TRIADS"), WILDLIFE SMUGGLERS/POACHERS, AND GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAKE ENFORCEMENT ESPECIALLY PROBLEMATIC (REFS A AND B). END COMMENT.

¶8. (U) PARTICIPANT LIST:

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